

2012 Cooperator of the Year

Blackberry Hills Farm located 4 miles NE of Jamestown is owned and operated by Joyce and Dave Shaul. It originally came to Joyce's Family in 1874 at a cost of \$4.75/ac.

Great Grandparents, John Henry Weisser and Maggie Belle Smith married in 1896 and they lived there together until 1957 when Mr. Weisser died.

The farm came into the possession of Bill and Fay Weisser Reynolds in 1957 who lived there for the next 40 years. The farm had produced various crops and livestock. In the 1950s Bill and his father-in-law, Floyd Weisser, terraced the farm with Floyd developing the plan and Bill doing most of the earthwork. Floyd worked for the soil & water conservation district in its' early years.

The farm was passed on to Joyce in 1994, and in 1998 the house was completely updated. The house and barn were originally built by Joyce's great-grandfather in 1904 and was constructed with oak lumber sawed on the farm and milled on site. At that time the well was drilled in close proximity to the barn and is still used today.

Until the mid 2000s the farm had been heavily grazed and livestock contributed to heavy damage of the existing ponds and terraces. Areas of erosion had developed and in 2007 Dave undertook a process focused on repairing and reducing erosion, enhancing terraces to provide good field drainage, and creating natural water sources for livestock and wildlife through the demolition of weakened structures and the construction of new dams.

The Moniteau Soil and Water Conservation District provided assistance through various practices including critical area seeding, drainage basin construction, field drains, pond demolition, and terrace rehabilitation. Building upon these practices and using the district's engineering and planning recommendations Joyce and Dave expanded on these practices and constructed one new pond and rebuilt four additional ponds for a total of 720 feet of new earthen dam structures. They installed two freeze proof waterers, repaired and rebuilt 2075 feet of terrace, constructed 1125 feet of water diversions, created 3 drainage basins, and emplaced a total of 1060 feet of field drains. Improvements will continue with the planned construction of new fencing to exclude livestock from timber stands and the addition of a new deep well. The farm has been row cropped and planted in soybeans for the past 2 years, as well as being timbered during the summer of 2012.

Joyce spends many hours planting and maintaining her flower gardens. She also spends a good deal of time sewing and creating dresses for her 4 grand-daughters. Joyce also expends a lot of energy raising and tending to her blackberry bushes. The 3 youngest grandsons enjoy coming to the farm to fish, ride the Gator and "help" with the work. Joyce has been retired for several years and Dave will retire in July from the Highway Patrol where he has worked for 33 years.

They plan to continue farming and working together on the many projects that are in progress and have been on hold for many years.